

OUR VOICE

An OV
Vendor's
Journey
to India

Pages 8 & 9

Photo: Theresa McBryan
*From Edmonton
to Bangalore*

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THE WORD

Stirring Up the Melting Pot

When you ask people about their culture, you get a lot of personal interpretations about what it is that you're asking. A person thinks of their chief identifier (chosen or otherwise) as their culture, this results in finding very selective information when making the inquiry. For example, a young teen may identify with youth culture (hip-hop culture or perhaps the culture of competitive sports); where an 80-year-old man may identify himself with his glory days as a man in his physical and creative prime, or the war he fought in bravely. If you live in Northern Ireland or the Middle East, your association with one religion or other is likely at the top of your list.

Smokers are sent outside in all kinds of weather due to the smell that they produce, amongst other things. This brings smokers closer together as a group, and due to the fact that so many of them exist in an ongoing state of protest; smokers are, loosely speaking, a culture.

Some cultures, like the Kurds, do not have to put any thought into how they might choose to identify themselves. They have no homeland nor formal governing body, they are a nation without a country. Much of the world remains in the grips of inter-tribal fighting, only exasperated by suffering economies. You generally need to live more of a settled lifestyle before you branch off into something like a subculture. Subcultures are abstractions of aspects of an overlying culture. People go to a lot of trouble to involve themselves in subcultures, it is their intensity that makes them so interesting.

In Canada and other countries that have become "melting pots" of many cultures, there looms the danger that the culture you were born into will water

itself down into something not at all recognizable. This is why so many cultural associations exist. These are a very healthy thing to belong to, it has nothing to do with "sticking to your own kind," rather, it keeps you rooted in the long line of people that lived before you. Being able to look at the context of your family over a period of hundreds of years paints a much broader picture of how you got here. I belong to an Icelandic cultural club. We keep in touch with the home planet; eat ethnic food on holidays and hold-up traditions that make life a little richer than it would be without a connection to your roots.

It does not really matter if you belong to a "recognizable" group or even if you have no idea what your bloodlines looked like more than a few generations back. What matters is that you have a feeling of true belonging from a group of people that care about you. This is, unfortunately, the trap of gang culture and is one of the reasons that so many child-soldiers exist in impoverished



Photo: Theresa McBryan

countries throughout the world. Gang culture brings the ugliness of mob rule into the realm of personal relationships. It really is better to be alone than to take every opportunity to get arrested or die in a knife fight.

The same thing exists on a much larger scale in the form of jingoism, the "us against them" rationale that seems to be present every time a geographical area is ethnically cleansed by the side with superior weaponry. Racism, classism and other character flaws do indeed exist in Canada, but do not make up who we are as a culture of Canadians. We treat our Natives badly in a lot of ways. The phenomenon of residential schools did exist until very recently in our history, for example. Canada is not blameless on all fronts by any means, but we have managed to create a culture that allows the myriad of cultures that make us who we are to co-exist.

The greatest or at least the quickest personal growth I have ever experienced has come from immersing myself in the

cultures of other countries to try and gain an understanding of how other people live, how they contextualize their decisions personally and historically and what is most important to them. Like many people, I don't know a great deal about most cultures, but I feel like a more well-rounded person every time I learn something new.

Tolerance is always preached as the bar for good behaviour, but it really isn't good enough. Tolerance means to put up with something; what we need is patience with each other and that comes from the work that goes into gaining an understanding of your surroundings and the people that make up your community. Canada is a meta-culture that blankets its component cultures without smothering them. Be proud of who you are, where you came from and where you live now. It's the Canadian way.

-Warren Bjarnason

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This Month in History



May 6th

Anne Boleyn to her husband Henry VIII, from the Tower of London where she had been taken as a prisoner on 2 May 1536. She was beheaded there on 19 May, her only crime her failure to produce a son and heir for Henry.

Our grace's displeasure and my imprisonment are things so strange unto me, that what to write, or what to excuse, I am altogether ignorant.

Replacements Available for Our Voice 2004 Calendar

Please note that the months of June, November & December of the Our Voice Urban Exposure Calendar contain printing errors.

Replacement calendars are now available from Our Voice.

For more information, please contact Ron at: 423-2285 Ext. 139.

We apologize for the inconvenience.



claim the aid of all and to say, 'Come then, let us go forward together with our united strength.'

May 13th

Winston Churchill's first speech to the House of Commons after becoming Prime Minister, 1940.

I say to the House as I said to Ministers who have joined this government, I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat. We have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind. We have before us many, many months of struggle and suffering.

You ask, what is our policy? I say it is to wage war by land, sea and air. War with all our might and with all the strength God has given us, and to wage war against a monstrous tyranny never surpassed in the dark and lamentable catalogue of human crime. That is our policy.

You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word. It is victory. Victory at all costs - victory in spite of all terrors - victory, however long and hard the road may be, for without victory there is no survival.

Let that be realized. No survival for the British Empire, no survival for all that the British Empire has stood for, no survival for the urge, the impulse of the ages, that mankind shall move forward toward his goal.

I take up my task in buoyancy and hope. I feel sure that our cause will not be suffered to fail among men.

I feel entitled at this juncture, at this time, to

May 29th

Thomas Creevey reports his conversation with the Duke of Wellington in the park at Brussels, 1815.

WORD W

'Now then, will you let me ask you, Duke, what you think you will make of it?' He stopped and said in the most natural manner: 'By God! I think Blücher [Prussian commander] and myself can do the thing.' - 'Do you calculate', I asked, 'upon any desertion in Bonaparte's army?' - 'Not upon a man,' he said, 'from the colonel to the private in a regiment - both inclusive. We may pick up a marshal or two, perhaps; but not worth a damn.' - 'Do you reckon', I asked, 'upon any support from the French King's troops at Alost?' - 'Oh!' said he, 'don't mention such fellows! No: I think Blücher and I can do the business.' - Then, seeing a private soldier of one of our infantry regiments enter the park, gaping about at the statues and images: 'There,' he said, pointing at the soldier, 'it all depends upon that article whether we do the business or not. Give me enough of it, and I am sure.'

WORD: Faculty of speech; locution, talk, parlance, verbal intercourse, prolation [archaic], oral communication, word of mouth, parole, palaver, prattle.

ROGET'S THESAURUS



Birth Announcement

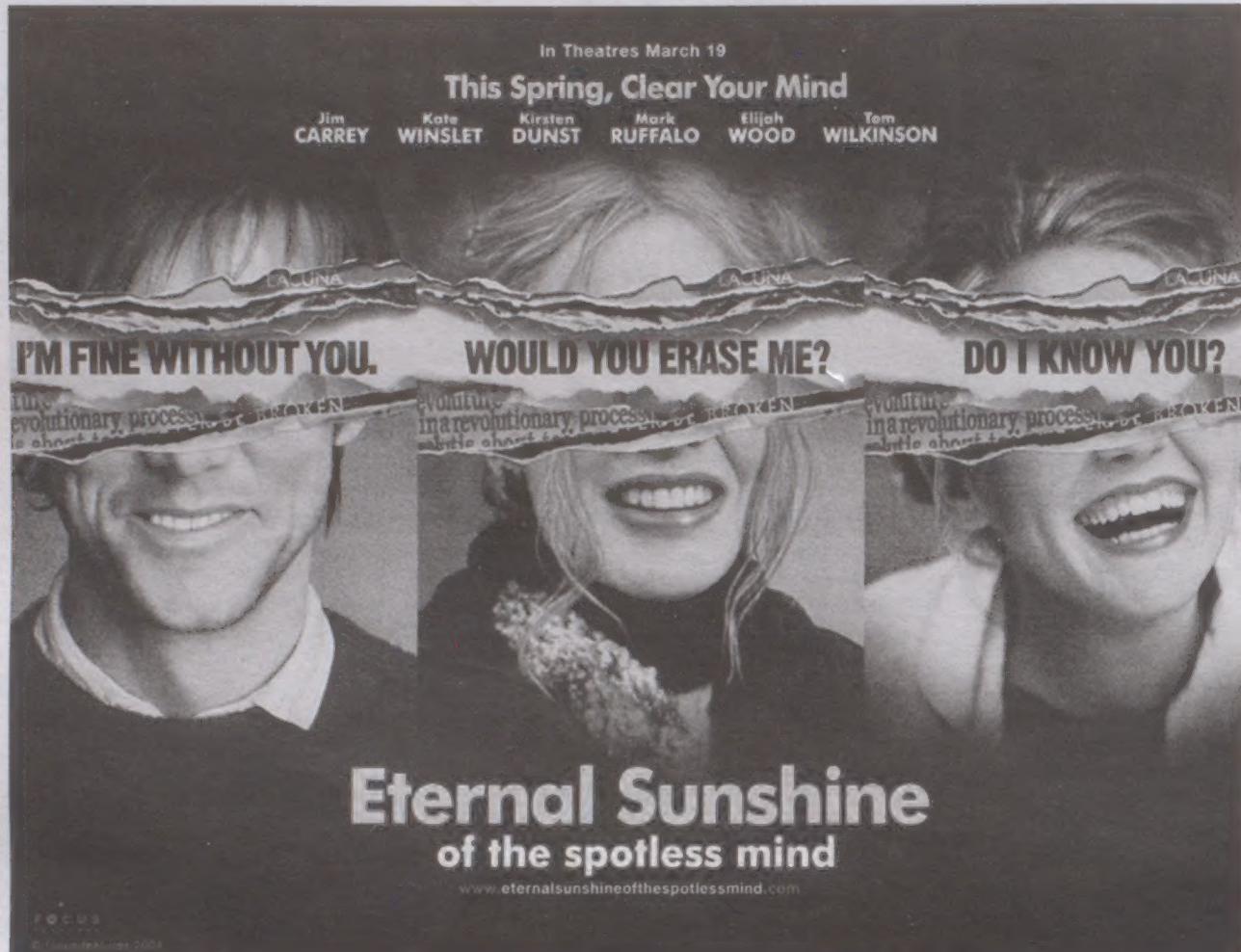
At Sturgeon Hospital on 2:41 a.m., March 22nd, Matthias Ferguson Bjarnason was born. His parents, Heidi Nicole Bjarnason and Warren Arni Gunnar Bjarnason are very proud and appreciate the warm welcome into the world that he has been given. Thanks to everyone for the love, support and presents.

THE VERDICT

V VERDICT

Decision, determination, finding, **verdict**, sentence, decree; opinion (belief); good judgment (wisdom)

ROGET'S THESAURUS



On Film

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind

Love is defined in the Devil's Dictionary as "a temporary insanity that is quickly cured by marriage" and "marriage, which should be pronounced mirage, is a mutual misunderstanding". Happy thoughts indeed. My fiancée and I recently attended a marriage preparation weekend wherein we, and 15 other couples glaring maturely at the same threshold, were forced to consider all the snakes and ladders that wedlock could bring. Romance has all become very, very complicated.

I think sexual love is the new opiate of the masses; spiritually, we lustily reap and sow (and purchase) in the moonbeams of reflected light - no God opiates anymore, the once penultimate human love is now the alpha and omega of all longing. Many of us live as man and wife with many partners, so there's no shock in admitting that, emotionally speaking, we've suffered divorce over and over again, with all its psychic fractures. When we finally get clapped out enough and fall face down into a mire of regrets, recriminations and shamming compromise, we hope we've retained enough red blood cells to bloody settle down for good. Here's hoping we, as Thomas More said, "have the spittle for it". Out of this Garden of Beaten comes the Kaufman movie romance.

Charlie Kaufman, who wrote "The Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" is a brilliant screenwriter and has actually made a name for himself on that credit alone - no small feat (John Mortimer wrote that screenwriters are typically as abused

and anonymous as the slaves who built the pyramids). He creates fantastical premises that could be science fiction if paced by a different metronome. You may deride the movie voice-over as some do puns, but Kaufman is as much a maestro of this technique as Woody Allen and has the canny ability to weave a story out of pure metaphor. The end product is beautifully realized, delicious, but wholly cerebral. One walks away mentally entranced but not feeling much esteem for humanity.

Kate Winslett plays the charmingly abrasive Clementine Kruczynski. She elbows her way into Joel Barish's (Jim Carey) life as he aimlessly roams around on Valentine's Day when he should be at work. Clementine (Clem) is aggressive and intriguing but her most notable quality is her unnatural and florescent hair colors. Often changing, it looks as if she's dumped a package of Kool-aid powder on her head - the effect is remarkably beautiful. It also gives her a magical, slightly unreal quality; the dream girl a lonely, artistic boy would doodle on the side of his brooding journals. With such surreal beauty, Clem seems to be above good manners or other pedestrian bothers. She is at times a grating contrast to Joel's quiet, thoughtful ways. Jim Carey seems like an emptied husk in this film, not a bad thing at all. He's doing what he's supposed to and controlling his usual mania, which often gives him a distracted look, as if he can't remember whether or not he turned off the oven. But the bloom begins to fade on this romance and it appears that Clem and her hair are keeping indiscreet company with other men. There's a confrontation and she leaves him. Morose and anguished, Joel tries to talk to her at the bookstore where she works and is shocked to find she doesn't remember him at all. Impossible, he thinks, and when discussing this conundrum with the bickering couple who brought them together, all is made clear. Clem's undergone a procedure that has erased all memory of Joel and

their life together; it's as if he never happened. Incensed, Joel does the only logical thing, he decides to have the same procedure done to himself. Dr. Howard Mierwiak (Tom Wilkinson) explains the process of isolating and abolishing any memories connected with a person, event or pet. In that remarkable way Kaufman has, Joel buys it and so does the audience. But when the actual procedure is being administered by Dr. Mierwiak's less dedicated staff, things go awry. Stan (Mark Ruffalo) and Patrick (played with purposeful blandness by Elijah Wood) make themselves rudely at home in Joel's apartment, cracking open the beer and talking about chicks. Soon Mary (Kirsten Dunst), the peppy blonde receptionist who worships Dr. Mierwiak's genius, joins them to watch the proceedings. While electric currents hunt to kill any memories of Clem from Joel's wired brain, Stan and Mary are drinking, smoking up and dancing in their underwear over Joel's lifeless form. Their shirking has serious consequences for Joel as his consciousness begins to assert itself and he becomes enmeshed in a lucid dream. He decides he wants to keep Clementine's memories and this is where the maverick, amazing filmmaking really takes off as we actually observe the battle.

To be able to Photoshop one's mind is an intriguing fantasy - airbrush the sad bits, erase the ugly things, crop the negativity. There are very romantically touching segments in this film, but it's mostly straight-up interesting. Joel and Clem don't have amazing chemistry but there's something complimentary about their disparate natures. As with most Kaufman characters, they're neither noble nor really likable but they are certainly recognizable in their self-absorbed hunt for happiness.

This is a remarkable movie and definitely worth seeing, but it's very light on the sunshine.

-Keyna Laurence

Would you like to tell your story to Edmonton?

Are there things that happened to you that negatively affect others as well?

Should other people know what's going on?

Send your story to wbjarnason@bissellcentre.org or come see the Our Voice editor at the Bissell Centre, 10527 - 96th Street.

Let your voice be heard!

THE RHUBARB



A Dream & a Miracle

"Women in Black regularly hold silent vigils around the world to protest war, rape as a tool of war, ethnic cleansing and human rights abuses anywhere they occur. They are silent because mere words cannot express the tragedy that wars and hatred bring. They are silent because they refuse to add to the cacophony of empty statements that are spoken with the best intentions, yet so often lead nowhere. They wear black as a symbol of sorrow for all victims of war, for the destruction of people, nature and the fabric of life.

Women in Black is an international peace network. Women in Black is not an organization, but a means of mobilization and a formula for action."

The above is a version of the mission statement of Women in Black that I have adapted and abridged. It gives context to a dream I'd like to share.

It was a dream of waking hours that came upon me at the Sidetrack Café on the evening of April 7th—the occasion of the Our Voice benefit for the paper and its vendors. I was sitting with two friends, Lenore and Ayal. Earlier, someone, reflecting on the plight of the poor and the homeless here in Alberta, had made the more general point that whatever will change the world on behalf of viciously exploited people or a viciously exploited environment, it will not be meritorious argument because no matter how well formulated, expressed, and valid such arguments might be, only those who have the heart for them will hear them. Those who do not will simply put forward their rationalizations—equally logical, equally well formulated, howsoever empty of compassion—and go on with what they're doing. Where you get with rational argument depends, not on what's true or just or right, but where you start from in your heart.

I was in the grips of that thought

when Lenore mentioned she had recently stood in silence with a local Edmonton group of Women in Black protesting against violence as a political tool. She remarked on the satisfaction of the silence. Perhaps, that satisfying absence was the presence of the healing, unspeakable Word that becomes possible in the absence of words, though now I am risking drivel. Doubly so because, apparently, some among the group carried placards; some had pamphlets. "Well," Ayal said, "what did the signs say?"

- I don't know; I didn't read them.
- Well, did they pass out the pamphlets?
- No, but they'd give them to anybody who asked.
- So, what were they about?
- I don't know; I didn't read them.

It was clear that the truth in the experience, for Lenore, was in the silence; that being seen in black in silence was in her mind what might transform a passerby, not any argument. In the moment in which I felt myself acknowledging her intuition, I had a dream. Forgive me its few words.

In this dream the whole world spun before me. Here and there around the globe were small groups of Women in Black standing in silence; in each group, two women carrying signs. One read, "We — all of us — we can't do this any more." The other read, "We — all of us — we can't go on like this any more."

Of the passersby, some thought it was about no increases in social assistance payments in Alberta for over 11 years, or about the viciously low minimum wage. Others thought it was about treating the poor too generously, and so just encouraging their numbers to grow.

Some thought it was about destroying the forests, while others thought it was about placing the survival needs of owls above the survival needs of a logger seek-

ing to feed and clothe his family.

It seemed to depend on your politics or what was bugging you, or maybe what news items had most recently caught your attention.

So some thought it was about misogyny, while others thought it was about teaching women to despair of men.

Some thought it was about Palestinian freedom fighters or terrorists or suicide bombers killing Israelis. Others thought it was about the Israelis humiliating, subjugating and slaughtering the Palestinians.

Some thought it was about those who can defend a murderous regime like Saddam Hussein's, while others thought it was about those who can defend a murderous regime like that of George Bush.

Some thought it was about Catholics and Protestants slaughtering one another in Ireland.

Some thought it was about Muslim Albanians and Christian Serbs murdering one another in Kosovo.

Some thought it was about the Western plutocracies making wage slaves of their own poor. Some thought about promoting hatred of the successful.

Some thought it was about transnationals destroying the informal economies and mixed farming that sustain the rural poor of the Third World, and displacing them to make room for monoculture. Some thought it was about leaving the rural poor of the world to starve on their farms when capitalist modernisation was the answer.

Surely everyone thought it was about the insane worship of gas guzzling cars and trucks with their monster engines and zero fuel efficiency? (The madness of "Hey, that thing got a hemi in it?")

But whatever the passersby thought, or didn't think but simply felt, they all found themselves agreeing, or - perhaps better - in concord, and one by one, both men and women; they took on the black dress and the silence, and their numbers grew, and eventually in this dream, everyone the world over stood together in black and silence in a universal unargued lament. No one had by dunning argument prevailed over another; nor even by any respectful conversation and compelling tour-de-force of reasoning, unwound the complexities of any of the world's quarrels; but in the silence, it seems, they had simply transcended them.

For out of the sadness and silence came healing. The black of their dress turned to white, and the spinning of the world slowed, and out of the white, as the confounding spinning slowed, came all the colours of the rainbow. And the whole world began a sane and wonderful waltz, and the individuals, and couples, and groups became the dance - each and every one, the dance; and all, its humble servant.

Well, of course, this is the drivel of a dream and I am overwrought. But it's true though, isn't it? Isn't it? Recognized in sinking wistfulness, in an overwhelming sadness, or perhaps merely as a fact - what the sign said; what all the signs say: we just can't go on like this anymore.

- Fabian Jennings

Would you like to tell your story to Edmonton?

RHUBARB R

Are there things that happened to you that you think negatively affect others as well?

Should other people know what's going on?

RHUBARB: A discussion, often heated, in which a difference of opinion is expressed:

Altercation, argument, bicker, clash, contention, controversy, debate, difficulty, disagreement, dispute, fight, polemic, quarrel, run-in, spat, squabble, tiff.

ROGET'S THESAURUS

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Let your voice be heard!

THE RHUBARB

Photo: Theresa McBryan

R RHUBARB

I want a dish to taste good, rather than to have been seethed in pig's milk and served wrapped in a rhubarb leaf with grated thistle root.

KINGSLEY AMIS



MULTICULTURALISM

I think that I have a culture. I'm just not quite sure what it is. I was born into a white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant heritage. But I don't know what that means culturally anymore, as if I ever did. But a Wasp was, in some ways, more clearly defined in my parents' day. I remember some Cold-War comments from my parents and their associates that only in retrospect were frighteningly ethnocentric, yet were a regular occurrence in the post world war two world. At the same time, my culture appeared to be defined only in terms of what it did not hold in common with others, of what it was not. And others, other cultures, the Other, they were always bad. I lived a culture of negation, the negation of that part of our humanity that did not look and act as we did. However, such an intellectual position as that with which I was raised brought about an interesting and radical point of view. I found myself strangely open to the inclusion of all cultures in my life, as there was no single clearly defined cultural perspective that held predominance in me such that other cultures were excluded.

Throughout our world's history, cultural exclusiveness has been a destructive influence. From roarings and grunts belched by mostly unclothed hairy people over a patch of land, through countless regional conflicts, the World Wars to 9-11, the hard edge of culture has played its part in the making of war. While many conflicts start with disputes over territory, attacks on the customs, the shared behaviours, the culture of other peoples quickly follow. This provides the psychological *raison d'être* for one country or region to

dominate another. We have heard Osama Bin Laden deride the culture of the United States and its allies; while George Bush has promised the vengeance of the Lord upon the 'evil doers,' supported by a culturally complacent media. It just goes on and on throughout history. The intent here is not to demean any culture. Culture provides a commonality of shared values, historical connectivity and continuity of meaning through symbols that extends beyond the individual members of a culture and the day by day unfolding of their lives. However, when culture blinds to other ways of looking at the world through exclusiveness, when a culture sees itself as superior to other cultures, when a culture ignores a relationship of equality with other cultures, it poisons the affinity of the participants. Culture truncated is cult, and that is in no one's best interests.

There are many examples of cultural myopia interspersed throughout the Internet. Some, such as the Ayn Rand Institute, openly ridicule other cultures in general and the social perspective of multiculturalism in particular as they advocate their own, exclusive culture. Ad homonym attacks are interspersed with a convoluted philosophy of arrogance in support of their position. Which of course begs the question: If you are not open to something then you can't learn about it, and if you can't learn about it then how can you know enough to criticize it? There is a saying that you can't know someone until you've walked a mile in their shoes. The rhetoric of the cultural exclusive proves the old bumper sticker, 'Minds are like parachutes; they only

function when open.'

We are in a unique position in Canada in having the inclusion of all cultures, multiculturalism, enshrined as an Act of Parliament. But it goes beyond the mere words of the Act. Cultural inclusiveness has extended into the social consciousness of our country. Contrast how the media questioned Belinda Stronach in the Conservative Party leadership contest over her inability to speak French in Canada, with presidential candidate John Kerry who has been derided for being able to speak French and for having French roots in the uni-cultural United States.

Kofi Annan said in his recent visit to Canada that we are like a mini United Nations. Our country accepts under multiculturalism the history, the symbols, the values of all who come here as equal and unique contributions to our society. The Canadian framework of multiculturalism permits a microcosm of the macrocosm to flourish. It allows Canada to reflect within its boundaries the cultural traditions of all peoples of the world. Multiculturalism counters the "My tribe is better than your tribe," conception that is inherent, in varying degrees, within any cultural tradition; and it encourages a sharing of cultural traditions that opens our society to the promise of a beautiful vision of inclusiveness. If only every country in the world were as open, the world would be a better place. This is our own Canadian culture, multiculturalism. If I have a culture, that is the one I wish it to be.

- James Lauder

Cantaffordem

This province shouldn't be called Alberta anymore. A name that comes to mind is Cantaffordem (the casualties of the adversarial-winners-losers-system) and I'm writing this letter in a room in Downtantem, formerly Edmonton, the capital.

Cantaffordem, the richest province per capita, is scandalously wealthy. For the last five years, it's taken in tremendous natural gas royalties and petrodollars, resulting in huge surpluses—conveniently underestimated—and a bloated treasury. However, with their recent budget, Klein's corporate Conservatives continue their attack on the poor. And their propaganda apparatus, the Public Affairs Bureau is the biggest in Canada. They are brainwashing and destroying we vulnerable with our own money.

You may remember that they slashed subsistence SFI payments in 1993 by up to 20 per cent and haven't restored them. Not a penny was added to the welfare rates in 2004; they weren't even indexed to the cost of living, and remain among the lowest in the land. Paltry AISH "benefits" stay the same. Seniors and the homeless were excluded by the budget. Cantaffordem also has the lowest minimum wage in the country. An increase in the minimum wage (\$5.90 an hour) would have helped the working poor, but that didn't happen. Yet, \$45 million of taxpayer's money was found to subsidize the horseracing industry.

The "fiscally responsible" Tories don't care to know how much more taxpayers will have to fork out for Cantaffordem, you shouldn't be poor, disabled or old; you must be productive, specialized and efficient—like a machine in other words. Most people on welfare are not competitively employable in this dog-eat-dog meritocracy. And punishing the victims of the adversarial system is just standard operating practice by the elite few who own and control the country. It's good for business.

In capitalist democracies, people are to serve the vaunted economy, and not the other way around. Clearly, so-called free markets don't meet the needs of the poverty-stricken even in rich provinces. Unlike corporations, considered persons under the law, the weak and the meek and the defenceless don't have high-priced lawyers to argue their case in any courtroom. That's called "equality of opportunity."

The great Canadian film, *The Corporation*, currently playing in Downtantem, documents how giant, anti-democratic corporations, consistently exhibit severe psychopathology. They are nothing but greed. Because it identifies with and supports them, so does the current government. It would be hard to find anyone in public life in Canada, who shows more contempt for the poor than does the Premier of Cantaffordem.

Governments impose gross income inequality, but they aren't the only ones to blame. A terrifying aspect of this society is the indifference, indeed detachment, displayed by those obsessed with security and comfort, the majority of the gullible middle class. These otherwise sane and sensible people, many of whom are churchgoers, have chosen to ignore, or deny, structural or systemic poverty, even as their votes maintain it. Arrogant elites like Klein could not operate were it not for this widespread public apathy.

- Doug Schill

THE RHUBARB



Where do the Buffalo Roam?

Curiosity almost killed me at age five when I thought petting these nice furry buffalo on my uncle's farm would be a good idea. Dad swerved the car just in time to save me and my little brother from a fate of being trampled to death, as I could see the lead Bison stomping his front feet and snorting. Thanks to my Dad, I survived.

I have had over 85 jobs in my 54 years. When I was 16, I quit high school to deliver dental supplies by pedaling a bicycle over 20 miles per day. At 17, I apprenticed as a painter to start with: grunt work including scraping, brush cleaning, preparation, and running supplies to the journeyman. Then I joined the labourers union and dug ditches, ran a power tamper, pushed concrete in wheelbarrows and lifted timber and large rocks as well as bricks to become a bricklayer's helper.

I froze my toes at -25C, got frostbite from wearing summer boots in the winter and did telephone soliciting in the spring. From one extreme to another, I progressed to building grainaries on an erection crew until a auto accident where I broke my breastbone.

By digging weeping tile I learned the true meaning of pain.

Next, I was a bouncer in a bar. Then from security to maintenance I went back to labouring to clean-up at an oil spill, to become a stuccoer's helper, a stock clerk, a letter sorter, a package deliveryman, a warehouseman chainman (on the Capilano and Quesnell Bridges), a plastic pipe production worker, a band organizer, a cashier in a health food store, a plumber's helper, a fire extinguisher distributor, a smoke alarm salesperson, a fence builder, a real estate salesperson (residential and commercial for nine years), a fundraiser for a federal political party, an Official agent for a federal political candidate, a campaign manager for a civic candidate, a pizza deliveryman, a phonebook deliveryman, a scale checker (at

an asphalt plant for the International Runway); and also I have been a utility officer, a district returning officer and a supervisory returning officer for all three levels of government.

My real estate dream of making in excess of \$200 per hour faded as I slowly burned out working 80 to 100 hours per week with little or no return on my investment of time. Now I'm wondering why I was on a medical leave, on welfare, I found myself not able to work fulltime but not sick enough to receive AISH. I now survive on a subsistence equal to \$4.00 per hour.

Over the course of the last 12 years I have joined the "Y" Toastmasters and the Alberta Historical Society. Also, I have volunteered at the Edmonton Heritage Festival, the Edmonton Christmas Bureau, First Night and Edmonton Inner City Housing. I have had 117 letters in print in the Edmonton Sun, Nominated Helen Ridgeway and Audrey Jensen for the YWCA, A Tribute To Women; submitted an innovative idea for the Ernest Manning Principle Award (women's surname's to be formally recognized in succession for further generations of female offspring).

Shortly after writing one letter to the Edmonton Sun, I, as a loyal member of the Alberta Social Credit Party called for then Solicitor General, Dick Fowler's resignation for incitement to break one of the Ten Commandments (i.e. Adultery, by allowing nude exotic dancing on Alberta's licensed premises including bars, taverns and lounges). I was suspended from this Provincial Party for one year and forbidden to speak the name Social Credit publicly. My name was recognized as a caller in a phone-in radio program in the heat of a Provincial election. I was voted-out permanently by the whole assembly, first for writing, second for speaking. Hence, after starting a support group, Civilized Animals With Clothes, to back-up Audrey Jensen's anti-stripping group, Citizen's For Decency, we put pressure

on the Alberta Government until 10 Major Orders were enacted to clean-up exotic striptease acts in Alberta

Some Civic leaders think that I am Public Enemy Number One after being accused Criminally Disturbing The Peace while flying the "Royal Canadian Union Jack" on Heritage Day. The Edmonton Police Service placed me in City cells for six hours. After seeing a Justice of the Peace I was released on my own Personnel Reconnaissance. However, Edmonton Police Property Division only gave me back my driver's license and \$0.38 disregarding that I had arrived with 119 items including my keys to my Company truck, my apartment and my Post Office Box; Also two prescriptions and my wallet. Almost a month later all but two of these items were returned! I had to break into my truck and my apartment.

To no avail, I still write Letters of Proposal to all three levels of Government. Among other things, as an Edmonton revitalizing Bridge from Gateway Boulevard (Calgary Trail) to Downtown, an Albertan Savings Bond Issue (incorporated by an Albertan Bank), an Albertan Smart Library Passport, an Edmonton Citizen's Pension Plan, a pedestrian-friendly Dragon-walkway crosswalk and an All-Nation (including First Nation) Embassy located in Edmonton.

Strong willed, this eighteenth of October I am determined to Challenge Excellence by running for Edmonton City Mayor. I have Edmonton in my blood. "Buffalo Terminator" Thomas J. Tomilson will be on the ballot. When homeless people had only the shelter of the Downtown firehall at -40C, it made my blood boil when three-term Mayor Bill Smith returned from a week in Thailand to receive news of a federal GST Rebate to the tune of \$8M and still did nothing for the poor.

- Thomas J. Tomilson

Tempted to Choose Welfare?

Eleven years ago, the Alberta Government reduced welfare benefits by 20%. Despite Alberta's economic growth and a cost of living increase of over 20% since then, there has been no significant increase in rates. No increase, despite the government's own Low Income Review. That review stated that welfare levels do not meet needs.

Despite this, there was nothing for welfare recipients in the recently released budget. Nothing except a sporty name change. Apparently the Minister responsible for "Alberta Works" does not want to tempt people to choose welfare.

Shirley did not choose welfare. She has been a recipient for 13 years. She has crippling arthritis and has recently been diagnosed with fibromyalgia. She is also waiting for knee surgery.

Shirley is raising her 14-year-old grandson. They have lived in Capital Regional Housing for 7 years. She says that living in the complex was good for the first 3 years but it is now plagued with thefts and drugs.

Shirley experienced the Klein cuts 11 years ago. For her, that translated to a \$115 cut. The minimal increases since then have gone directly to rent and utilities.

Shirley finds it difficult to get by financially. She has to use the Food Bank. Some needs, right now, like non-covered dental work and

drugs are not being met. She is disappointed that there is no relief for her small family.

In this budget the punative government continues to turn its back on those persons who are among the most voiceless and vulnerable in the province.

- Mary Bell

Cults

A common bond existing among 9 unrelated individuals having family members who were assimilated into different cults, was the catalyst to start the organization called the E.S.A.M.A. (The Edmonton Society Against Mind Abuse) on May 16th, 1985. This group has followed cases of abduction that go back over 30 years.

E.S.A.M.A. formed as a group on May 16th, the Edmonton Society Against Mind Abuse that has continued to operate to the present day. This charitable organization has operated without government funds and only by public donations. There is only one other organization like it in Canada, located in Quebec, and only a few others, scattered across the rest of the world.

When the public thinks of Cults they automatically think: "religions." This is a misconception. There are actually 4 types of Cults:

- Religious
- Political
- Psychological/Educational
- Commercial/Business.

The common characteristics of all cults include:

- Control of one's behavior
- Control of thoughts or beliefs
- Control of one's emotions
- Control of communication, both incoming and outgoing.

RHUBARB R

RHUBARB: A discussion, often heated, in which a difference of opinion is expressed:

Altercation, argument, bicker, clash, contention, controversy, debate, difficulty, disagreement, dispute, fight, polemic, quarrel, run-in, spat, squabble, tiff.

ROGET'S THESAURUS

One example of a local experience was Lloyd (The current President of the ESAMA) who had his teenager abducted by the Moonies. Lloyd had exhausted all of his own personal efforts to get his son back, including police, relatives and friends—none of whom would or could do anything to return the boy. It took a great deal of time and effort, and still there was no success at regaining the relative.

The Mental Health Organizations do not understand the situation regarding Cult abductions and feel that it is the responsibility and concern of the family and not that of society in general.

Another example was Betty (another member) whose son was absorbed into the Church of Scientology and relocated to Toronto many years ago. Betty felt helpless, hopeless, despondent, and unable to locate any supportive help. The last words from her son to her were: "Mom, I have to disconnect from you." In the past thirty years, Betty has only had sporadic phone contact with him. Now, there are grandchildren, and she has very little contact with them as well.

Edmund Burke said: "All that is necessary for the forces of evil to take control, is for enough good people to do nothing."

- Cecil Garfin

For anyone wanting more information, you may contact the E.S.A.M.A. at: 780 452 1830 or 780 484 4639 Fax: 780 452 1831 or 780 444 4079 Or E-mail: esama@ecn.ab.ca

For more information regarding the upcoming June Conference: "The Violation of Innocence — How Cults Abuse Children," refer to the May 2004 Our Voice back cover: Earth's General Store Activist Agenda.

SCUTTLE

Prisoners of the Ice Queen

S SCUTTLEBUTT

A drinking fountain on a ship; A cask on a ship used to hold the day's supply of drinking water.

THE AMERICAN
HERITAGE DICTIONARY



From
Edmonton
to Bangalore

Culture Shock is a phrase that entered our vocabulary in 1958. Merriam-Webster describes it as "a sense of confusion and uncertainty sometimes with feelings of anxiety that may affect people exposed to an alien culture or environment without adequate preparation." Re-entry culture shock for those returning is also recognized. I've just returned from a six month sojourn on the other side of the globe and I find the culture shock involved in coming back is ever so much more painful than that of going.

I traveled to India last fall and experienced a tremendous shock in my first few days just at the patina of grime that twenty years of imperfectly burned hydrocarbons had left on every conceivable surface. This is to say nothing of the discomfort involved in breathing the omnipresent black exhaust belching from trucks, busses and every form of motorized transport you can imagine. Luckily the place I spent most of my time was outside a large metropolitan area, so I didn't obsess about that for too long. I didn't find the physical environment particularly stressful after the first little while because I have been hanging around the inner city for a while, where there are lots of dilapidated buildings and trash heaps and before that I lived out in the country for many years. As far as I was concerned,

the cow browsing my compost heap was just fine by me. And I hate mosquito bites pretty much the same everywhere.

The changes in relational dynamics with people were subtler. It took me a long time to relax and stop expecting to be adversely criticized at every point. I think people found my cynicism and sarcasm a little much at the beginning. Eventually I found that it was OK just to be myself. I loved that I could laugh and tease people, (and bargain like crazy in the market) without guarding myself from some potentially crushing put down. Over the course of my stay (six months) I began to feel buoyed up by a sense of optimism and hope just from the positive energy I got from very ordinary people all around me. South Indians have such an innate sense of graciousness, humor and tact I often found myself ashamed of the crudeness and arrogance of my fellow tourists. There is poverty in India, no doubt about that and very little in the way of any kind of social services. But this hasn't made either the people who are poor or those who are not so poor quite as angry, intolerant and just downright rude with each other as it has in North America.

Then I came back. It was like flying to some sort of station in outer space. Every inner habitat was hard and impervious and carefully guarded. Outside was cold and hostile. I could breath the air and there was gravity but other than that I might as well have been in the depths of interplanetary space the way I suddenly had to start protecting myself from the elements and from other people. Suddenly there was no more just slipping on a pair of sandals and stepping around the corner for a meal or a snack, greeting the neighbor ladies out washing their dishes on their doorsteps or waving to the kids calling "Sai Ram Auntie"



SCUTTLEBUTT

from the roof of the little school down the block. Instead I walked down frigid streets empty of any human form for blocks ahead of me. I got on buses where people carefully avoid eye contact. I walked down aisles in shopping plazas at closing time with the clang of dropping metal shutters reverberating through long empty halls. I saw the security people eyeing suspiciously anyone they suspected might not have money to spend, who might, horrors, just be trying to stay warm. I don't like being here any more. We are already living in outer space in this country, and perfectly willing to throw anyone, who in the estimation of the space ships' owners isn't useful, out of the airlock. The harshness and coldness and brutality of our environment have permeated right into our souls. We are like the prisoners of the Ice Queen in the old Hans Christian Anderson fairy tale and we do not know it.

India has tremendous extremes of wealth and poverty. In the area I was living, day laborers could only expect to earn about \$25 a month. Many agricultural workers are not paid in money at all; only as much rice as farm owners have to give them after three years of no monsoons. Whole farm families are committing suicide by drinking pesticide when they finally can get no more credit for seed grain. They are constrained by seed loans to buy hybrid and genetically altered seeds for crops that cannot reproduce themselves, (sterile grains with no germ, therefore no seed saving for the next year) from agri-biz corps. These sometimes do not even grow, because of, again, third world dumping. The year we were there, the groundnut crop would not grow, because of defective seed from Monsanto, even for those who could afford to irrigate. The Indian government is suing the company, but that does not help those for whom last year's crop was their last chance.

Things like DDT and other dangerous chemicals, which North Americans will not tolerate anymore, are polluting the environment. So western chemical firms are dumping their huge leftover backlog of stock in third world countries. Think of that when you buy your bag of cheap basmati rice. Poor people denude hillsides for firewood. There was absolutely no surface water left in the area I was living.

Everyone was dependant on rapidly depleting aquifers of ground water. Somebody had to be paid for every drop of that water. HIV and Aids are approaching epidemic proportions, especially among police and prostitutes, drug resistant tuberculosis is spreading like wildfire, and people sleep in a haze of insecticide vapor to combat the spread of dengue and malarial fevers. Life expectancy is not much more than fifty for poor people.

Poor parents surrender their children to the care of pedophiles because they cannot feed them anymore, or pay a huge chunk of the family income to educate that one boy they hope will earn enough to pull the whole family out of poverty. Anarchists hide out in the hills and sneak down to bomb government buildings. Every social evil you can think of exists somewhere in India.

On the up side: the outsourcing of computer jobs from North America and Europe in the data processing sector and the call centre business is alleviating the situation somewhat, much to the chagrin of Western politicians who didn't see this coming when they gave corporations such sweeping privileges. This is giving young Indian women a much-desired entry into the paid work force, and independence from their fathers. Every young Indian male lusts after a computer, (or five or six to set up an internet cafe). India has eighteen of her own communication satellites and is determined to be a major player in the space age. There is an emerging middle class, and places for young people to get off the farm. Public transportation is frequent and cheap, although the buses, trucks, trains and taxis people ride in are sometimes also incredibly crowded and ramshackle. India is building its own compact car, for about \$4000 retail. This is definitely a country on the move.

Business is a passion for Indians; there are amazing numbers of small businesses. Streets are full of tiny, tiny shops and pushcarts and every kind of entrepreneurial enterprise you can think of. Peddlers are everywhere; touts roam the streets trying to lure potential customers into a shop. They all think every westerners' pack is just rammed full of money. Most of them don't make a lot of money by our standards, but there is such a feeling of joyousness and

hope and optimism in the streets. There is so much color, creativity, skill and ingenuity everywhere you look. There are smiles, laughter, really goofy jokes, sidelong looks of amusement and a festival every week (exaggeration). Canada charges a 150% duty on the import of the wares of these enthusiastic producers, to protect Canadian manufacturers and workers.

Joy and despair exist together in India the way the watchman's thatched-roof hut with the scruffy chickens scratching about the door crouches beside the glossy apartment building with the air conditioning, marble floors and elevators. This is just the way life is and it is not considered very wise to brag about your good fortune, or revile those who do not enjoy it, because another turn of the wheel can land you in the watchman's hut just as easily as in the penthouse.

India is also full of westerners traveling about trying to find some spiritual solace for that chill feeling around their heart. We really do have to start figuring it out. Wealthy people going to India to meditate at the feet of gurus and practice yoga will not melt that ice. Making a little room in our own world for people who are not quite standard issue, not in center of that bell curve of acceptability, will. Opening up space, creating niches, even something as simple as letting peddlers sell on our streets without having to pay crushing license fees to put their wares on a table on the sidewalk would help. Instead of destroying campgrounds in the river valley, confiscating the bedding of homeless people, and magically expecting these people to just disappear we could actually look at what it would take to create affordable housing, jobs, businesses and dignity for everybody. We can melt the ice ourselves, but we have to realize it is there first. It took getting away from that coldness and emotional brutality for a while to let me see how much the harshness and social intolerance of the world I grew up in shaped me. India was a wonderful experience; I wish I were still there. I was beginning to like the person I found inside me while I was there, and I'm afraid I'm going to lose her again if I hang around here too long.

-Theresa McBryan

SCUTTLEBUTT S

Like the office watercooler, the shipboard water barrel—the scuttlebutt—was a social meeting place and the center of shipboard gossip and rumor. So today, the latest scuttlebutt is figuratively "the latest rumor." The literal sense is Standard, as is its figurative sense in all but Formal and Oratorical uses.

KENNETH G. WILSON



SCUTTLEBUTT

S SCUTTLEBUTT



SCUTTLEBUTT: blab, gossip, noise, rumor, talk, tattle, whisper

ROGET'S THESAURUS

A MUSICAL GROUNDSWELL

Positive Energy From the Inner-city

About three-and-a-half years ago, I had the good fortune to meet Earl Predy, Finance Manager at Bissell Centre, who is also an avid musician. Earl invited me to play at the monthly coffeehouse/open stage that occurs on the 3rd Tuesday of each month in the drop-in area at the Bissell.

Well, I took him up on his invitation, and the result of my involvement with Earl, the Bissell Centre and the coffeehouse has been the revelation of the wealth of hidden talent in the inner city.

After several months of volunteering at the coffeehouse, and sharing the stage with a core group of musicians and volunteers, it became apparent that many of the artists who played at the open stage were very talented, but had little hope of receiving recognition or further exposure for their craftsmanship.

Two great ideas came together when Earl became aware of the availability of a seed grant from the Action for Healthy Communities (A.H.C.) project, and we were exploring ideas to expand the awareness of the wealth of inner-city artists. The idea of producing a CD developed and the coffeehouse volunteers agreed to take on the project. Early in the process, the Our Voice newspaper staff saw the merit in working together with us.

With the help and support of Mark Bubel, facilitator for A.H.C., the CD project forged ahead. As none of us had done any formal recording before, each step was slow and often frustrating, but the strength of the core group prevailed. Pieter de Vos Jr., illustrator, designer and photographer for Our Voice, came up with the name "Patchworks", and agreed to design the CD cover. Bruce Fox took on the role of Recording Engineer. As we were unable to find a single location to do the actual recording, we managed to beg and borrow short-term recording spaces from The Mennonite Centre, West Edmonton Music Society, and various offices in the Bissell

Centre. It took us a full year, but we finally succeeded in recording 16 songs. As the recording circumstances were far from ideal, the recording quality of each song varies, and was finally edited and mixed down through the combined efforts of Bruce Fox and computer genius Colin Broughton.

With the distribution talents of the Our Voice vendors, the Patchworks CD has now sold more than 1700 copies, and the resulting profits are being used to compensate the artists who performed on the CD as well as going toward the production of a follow-up CD.

Carrying on the push to promote inner-city artists, and to return something to our community, plans are well underway to present an inner-city music and arts festival. On June 12, 2004, the first annual Heart of the City Music Festival will be staged in Giovanni Caboto Park, from 11:00 A.M. to 9:00 P.M. Through posters and word-of-mouth, over 20 acts have come forward to play at the Festival. The response from local businesses, community agencies, the Edmonton Labour Council, local artists and others has been wonderful. Advice from Edmonton Folk Festival staff, administrative support by Action For Healthy Communities and McCauley Community League, free ads by the Boyle McCauley Newspaper, and a dedicated committee of festival volunteers are all working hard to make the project a success.

An underlying surge of energy has been growing to reveal the blossoming of artistry in a part of the city that is usually painted as bleak and needy. The Bissell Centre coffeehouse, Patchworks CD, Our Voice Magazine, Heart of the City Music Festival, and a proposed series of interviews and articles for CJSR radio are all proof that a positive spirit is alive and well, and emerging through the creative talents of inner-city artists.

To establish an "Inner-city Arts Society" has recently become the dream of many of us. Pooling recording equipment, printing facilities, display venues, and the experience of those currently involved in these projects could lead to a bright future that will only be limited by our imagination.

- Roy Agnew

HIGH SECURITY LEARNING

Avery Bennett suffers from occupational deficit disorder. At 27, she has already worked in a chocolate factory in Banff, developed photos in the Yukon, managed a bookstore in Edmonton and is now teaching in New York City.

This time, however, things are not going as she planned.

Bennett's school is situated in Washington Heights, a somewhat dangerous area located south of the Bronx and west of Harlem. Full-time guards patrol the lunchrooms. Classrooms include direct phone lines to security officials, and students are never allowed to leave class—even to go to the bathroom—because of fear of violence erupting in the hallways.

"Bathroom breaks are like field trips," Bennett says. "Everyone goes together in one huge group."

This is your typical inner-city elementary school. Yet, the challenges Bennett faces began well before she even entered the United States. After quitting her job in Edmonton, selling her car and giving up her apartment, she was still waiting on her work visa to arrive. As luck (or fate) would have it, she received the permit three days before leaving, only to be welcomed to New York City by the blackout. "I'm constantly testing myself and not wanting to fall into that comfort zone where you never want to leave," she says.

Motorcyclists rev by in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, where Bennett's tiny studio flat costs \$1100US a month, and she notes the Hell's Angels own a large chunk of her neighbourhood. She's nonchalant when pointing to gang members and acts oddly desensitized to their presence. There's good reason why.

Shortly after experiencing the blackout, Bennett encountered every New Yorker's worst nightmare. "I walked into the lobby of my apartment, between the locked and unlocked doors, put down my bags and a guy came in after me. All of a sudden he was in my personal space and he said 'give me your money, not your wallet, not your purse.' I looked down and he had a 2 1/2, 3-inch blade pointed at my stomach before I realized, 'oh my God I'm in this situation!'"

The man left without harming Bennett after she handed over her cash-\$50US. But it turned out filing a police report was the most shocking part of the day. "They [the officers] were pissed at me for

not calling 911 and the one actually said to me 'I don't know what the police do in Canada but here we like to catch the criminals.' After telling the officers that the attacker was white one of them said, "Imagine this, a white guy mugging people. What's the world coming to?" Both officers were black.

Bennett claims she's over the ordeal. That, or it hasn't sunk in yet because more pressing issues occupy her mind-like teaching. As if education cutbacks weren't bad enough for Bennett back home in Alberta, they're exponentially worse in New York City. Most inner-city schools are overcrowded with students and understaffed by teachers. Even public schools in the ruffly areas of Manhattan are feeling the strains of decreased funding.

Last year, at Duke Ellington School, where Bennett teaches, the principal admitted 600 kids. This year, L-shaped closets had to be renovated into classrooms in order to fit 1000. "There's no room," says Bennett, "because there's really no room."

Although the school provides her with an ample number of textbooks, Bennett is left to develop her own detailed curriculum for five separate grades. Within each grade, sometimes up to 37 students, are a few non-English speakers and others with mild to moderate learning disabilities. Her contract will last one year as a "cluster roamer teacher," which means changing classrooms every period, marking assignments at free desks in the library and hanging her coat in the only area left available—another teacher's closet. She admits the school's track record includes a high turnover rate, which explains why over half the staff this year are first-year international teachers, many of whom are Canadian.

So, after living it up in the Big Apple for a single semester, what's Bennett's reaction to all this? Simple, she just shrugs off the stress and hugs her new life.

"This gong show that I've been through is not going to make me walk away, and I'm going to stay the full year—but would I recommend others to come here? I don't know yet, but they should come prepared to be either stressed out all the time or learn to just take things as they come. I came here knowing that this would be New York. And I like it."

-Neil Parmar

SUBVERSES

ON LIFE'S HIGHWAY #55

Another year, another birthday.
Slept in and hoped someone would
wish me well. However, guess they let
sleeping birthday guys lay where
they want, in case they whine or yell.

Life as good in 2002.
Now have a regular part-time
job as well.
Went to the Senior's drop-in, a man
said to me: "F*** U2" Had to smile to
the bitter man, then he told me
to go to hell.

Another year, another birthday without
alcohol. Slept in and dreamt
about a friendly female. She's young,
wished me "Happy 55" and said she'd
call. Before long she'd bring me our
favourite ginger ale.

Another start for everyone.
Including my Happy Birthday 55. No
one gave me a gift, am gifted enough
and need none. And now on Hi! Way
#55 - 2 young to drive.

Too young to drink and drive, too
young to smoke cigs and die. But
why, I say, why join these foolish
folks' foul flimsy need. Instead, I
think I'll go to the doctor and ask if I
can fly by sitting still, smiling silly,
seeing sweet sounds, smoking weed.

-Ernie Ballantine

THE TEARS THAT FALL

Since the Lord reached down
and took you
My life goes on without you.
All I got is memories and pain
nothing is the same.
I have to hide my heartaches
When someone speaks your name
Sad, is the hearts that loved you
Silent, the tears that fall
Living my life without you Granny
is the hardest part of all!

-Timothy Tremblay

April, 2004

LOVE BLINDS

Love blinds
the passage of time
stops the clock
that reality tick tocks

Love is caring, sharing
bonding of two
Without strength, breaks
shatters, forget glue

Love is understanding,
one of two
strong enough to make three,
a bundle of joy
to bounce on your knee,
the happy smile of glee

On and on love goes
until it's uprooted like
the mighty oak tree.
Then you pondered
"What happened to me?"

- Randolph Elliott

GRANITE REFLECTIONS

Towering in the Atlantic Ocean like a Rocky Mountain, mountainous, a gigantic iceberg drifting slowly south down Iceberg Alley to melt away in the warm tropical currents. The most awesome white mountain I'd ever seen in the ten years of my life. It had sharp peaks that seem to reach the blue sky, not a cloud could be seen, only the sun rising over the horizon of the Atlantic Ocean.

Three days before, I'd left my hometown and hitched a ride to the place of my father's childhood. I had arrived unannounced and still in my plaid slippers, a frightened ten-year-old running from a home with domestic problems.

All around me were pure white and black seagulls and gannets just squawking and screeching. I was standing aboard of a twenty-five to thirty foot fishing boat. My uncle Doc and his brothers and sons were reaping the benefits of a near full cod trap. I could see the big smile on Doc's sea-weathered face as he gaffed and pulled cod-fish into the boat almost his size (Doc was about four and a half feet tall. He built the boat we were fishing from; that was his trade, boat builder and fisherman.)

Boat full of codfish, redfish, etc... the trap reset, we chugged home. It was one of the best days of my ten-year life.

Doc is gone now and so are most of the codfish. But still, on a sunny day, off the coast of Newfoundland, you will find that white mountain slowly drifting down Iceberg Alley.

- To Doc.

Your loving nephew, Randolph Elliott

GOOD MEDICINE

It is not easy to extend trust to practitioners of psychopharmacology when one's inner world is a veil of tempests, and a history of disappointments has stolen the light.

But with the proper prescriptions one can overcome despair, delusions and angst.

Do not be suspicious of those whose job it is to help. Modern psychiatry has married compassion and science.

Continue to take your medication.
Heed sage advice.

- Ky Perraun

SUBVERSES S

Intended or serving to **subvert**, especially intended to overthrow or undermine an established government.

MATTY THE BULL

I was born in a log cabin 100 miles off the coast of Vancouver Island.

During my teen years, I fished for salmon with enormous nets and hand grenades.

I worked my way through college
being an alibi for the mob.
I never knew where I was until the
lawyers told me, later on.

Then, my boy Matthias was born
and he wrestled me to the ground.
He stole my heart and brought back
the magic of eyes with fresh lenses.

-Warren Bjarnason

FIBRE, FACTS & FALLACIES

FIBRE

Life is made too easy.
Mankind's moral fibre is
giving way under the softening influence of luxury.

JOHAN HUIZINGA



One Shot Meal

Inexpensive meals that can be made in one pot or pan

two carrots into a salad bowl. Julienne one red, yellow or orange pepper, one two-inch square cube of peeled ginger root and a quarter of a red cabbage. Add julienned ingredients into the bowl and squeeze the juice of one lemon (not bottled Real-Lemon) and three tablespoons of Japanese(dark) sesame oil into the bowl. Drain the buckwheat noodles in a colander and mix with the vegetables. Refrigerate.

Presentation:

In a dry pan, put one cup of whole almonds on low heat until they start to brown. Be careful not to let the almonds go black, this can happen in a matter of seconds. Crush the almonds with the side of a knife or cleaver (or in a brown paper bag between two cutting boards) and sprinkle over the salad. Roasted or leftover BBQ chicken pieces (also marinated in lemon and sesame oil) can be served on top of each individual serving if desired.

- Warren Bjarnason

Ingredients:

- Buckwheat noodles
- two carrots
- one bell pepper
- one two-inch square of ginger root
- one cup of whole almonds
- ¼ of a red (or white) cabbage
- one whole lemon
- dark sesame oil

Directions:

Start by boiling buckwheat noodles, draining, then dropping into an ice bath to stop the cooking process. On a box grater, grate

Our Vice



Knackered

Yep, I knew it would happen. Sooner or later it happens to the best of us. Sleeping good, hangin' out with good friends, doing a job that I enjoy, playing music and keeping a generally positive attitude has had a adverse effect on my typically cynical outlook on life.

It's sick.

It's twisted.

I'm not saying that this sense of well-being has made me want to knit sweaters for puppies and take up a peacemaker attitude like Mahatma Gandhi because that just isn't me (I've always been more of a chase the nephew and nieces around the backyard with a weed whacker kinda' guy).

It was just that being a depressive, self-absorbed wanker wasn't working anymore and as in most things in my life, it changed of its own accord and I wasn't even trying. At least not consciously that is.

Feeling good is one of those zero effort things. Either you do or you don't. If you think about the rationale of it all you'd find that Zen state that you're in is quite temporal. Feeling like a million bucks has all the shelf life of a loaf of bread and rightly so. If you felt great every day you wouldn't know from good.

As cool as it is when you feel better about yourself there is a down side to it and that's because you're generally too busy to truly enjoy it.

But when it comes to being depressed and rundown you have all the time in the world to appreciate the subtle intricacies of being a bag o' mashed sphincters.

Well-being? Or being well, it's a question of perspective and quite possibly morality in some cases. I'm sure that Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot and Saddam felt that their well-being was best served by roasting their fellow countrymen over the open pit of genocide but, by doing so they proved to the world that being one definitely doesn't mean you're the other.

For myself, if I were to choose between a sense of well-being and being well I'd take the latter every time.

Nuff said.

- Bruce (@#*&%!!) Fox

On Vice

The vice named surrealism is the immoderate and impassioned use of the stupefiant image or rather of the uncontrolled provocation of the image for its own sake and for the

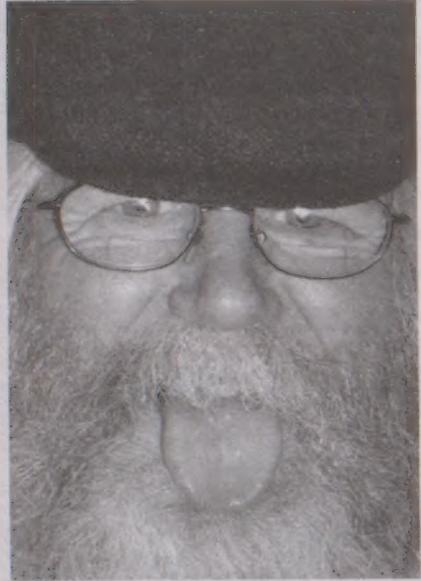
element of unpredictable perturbation and of metamorphosis

which it introduces into the domain of representation; for each image on each occasion forces you to revise the entire Universe.

- Louis Aragon

VENDOR REPUBLIC

THE FOX'S DEN



They're Baaack!

We had fortunate circumstances that ultimately lead to the end of the strike. There was an announcement that the company was for sale and that meant that A-Channel had to negotiate with the staff seriously.

It would be harder to sell the company if a labour dispute was attached to it. Once A-Channel started negotiating seriously, it only took two-and-a-half days to reach an agreement. The strike that lasted 166 days could have been over sooner if all staff would have shown solidarity and walked out. The company figured that they could freeze out employees during the winter and break the morale of the rank and file.

The union (Communication, Energy & Paperworkers Union) had to agree to the lay-off if twelve positions, ten full time and two part time were to remain intact. The contract was ratified on February 14, 2004. March 1, 2004, staff started returning as per shift schedule.

The non-returnees received an enhanced severance package to tie them over until they find gainful employment. There exists little or no chance of getting rehired in a dif-

ferent craft. That's the downside.

On a positive note, they got nearly everything they had asked for on September 17, 2003, the beginning of the dispute.

Wage grid - The company had strongly suggested that it would never happen.

Jurisdiction language - It means keeping Edmonton jobs in the city.

Part-time rights - The contract covers the part time worker, the same benefits and rights as full time employees.

To secure a first time contract in the province of Alberta is not impossible but awfully difficult to attain. There is no legislation to compel the two sides to negotiate and produce a binding contract.

Morale remained high on the picket line because of strong support not only from their union but also union solidarity from one coast to another.

Now that they are back on location, the atmosphere is tense, like walking around on eggshells. Union rep Adrian Pearce is confident that the striking employees will continue to perform their work in a professional manner and get back to making great television once more!!

- Kevin Fox

Small Victories

The eldest of five children, I was born in a small community where farming was the main source of income. I also was born with one percent vision in one eye, and the other eye almost sealed shut. We also had the difficulty of coming from a very dysfunctional family. There wasn't a loving, caring atmosphere.

I mostly wore hand-me-downs from cousins, and some of the time, shoes which were too small, as money wasn't there too often. Our grandmother on my mother's side made us clothes when she could, sometimes making shirts and dresses out of flour sacks. We also had very little to eat at times, but I think that helped me to budget wisely when I grew up.

when the bough breaks • eric uhlich • thelampshade.ca

the complicit sea of the corporations is composed simply of 'consumers', and

consumer culture is the great leveler...

variation vanishes under auspices of want

before long, we adopt the homogenous identity as our own —

or it just swallows us whole.



Soothsayer Sandy



S SOOTHSAYER

Soothsayer. Beware the
Ides of March. Caesar.
He is a dreamer. Let us
leave him. Pass.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE



TAURUS (April 20th - May 20th)

Since "patient, persistent, thorough, retentive, discriminating and materialistic" are mental key words describing you Taurus, you might be a good candidate to conduct testing to see if the same quality attributed to Mozart's and Bach's music - i.e. that it heightens mental alertness - can also be applied to Loreena McKennitt's and Stevie Ray's entire catalogue of studio recordings.

GEMINI (May 21st - June 20th)

Since that newest marvel of miniaturized technology - the GPS suppository - has (at least for the time being) rendered cattle rustling obsolete, you might be on the lookout for a new hobby Gemini. What about "culture vulture"? Imagine the fun you'd be at recitals if you could simply listen to the music and tell everybody seated around you whether the pianist is right or left-handed.

CANCER (June 21st - July 22nd)

G.W. got bit by a snake then went freakin' bonkers, like he had some kind of weird-ass, voices-in-his-head, pre-conceived plan to ram through (or something). He put a bounty on all snakes, then drove his gas-guzzling, luxury SUV all over the habitat for days, trying to crush every snake. Then he lit the habitat on fire, trying to burn out all the snakes so he could crush them with his gas-guzzling, luxury SUV. Just as he noticed that flames were starting to scorch his expensive mansion on the edge of the habitat and he tried to run for the fire hose, he noticed that his leg had gotten gangrenous because it gave out on him and he fell down. His nasty-smelling leg didn't really concern him though because he had fallen into a snake-pit. Maybe it's an old wives remedy Cancer, but if you get snake-bit, keep your head and just try sucking out the poison first.

LEO (July 23rd - August 22nd) "Lunar energy is internal, maternal, nurturing, deeply emotional - and absorbed and internalized by our astral bodies. A lunar eclipse is particularly relationship oriented - and our connections with others can be severed, challenged, or suddenly welded together as the shock calls one to action." There will be a total eclipse of the moon on May 4th. Be careful if you're in western Australia involved in an intimate 2-hour foot massage (1 hour per foot; beats an inch an hour; that's only 2 feet per day.)

VIRGO (August 23rd - September 22nd)

Did you ever have one of those experiences that give you rictus? That's a gaping or opening of the mouth and it can be transmitted by an amazing Cirque du Soleil performance or by the welling up of relief and happiness at a much-anticipated event (death would likely do it too). Such will be the experience if we retain our cultural dependency on fossil fuels yet are still lucky enough to get some precipitation in 2010. (Did you know that rain contains Vitamin B12?)

LIBRA (September 23rd - October 22nd)

As election time nears and the commons becomes polluted with that insulting, vulgar and unctuous theme of elected sycophants everywhere (the "Pork Barrel Boogie"), Sandy is reminded of his days as a carny. Wandering up and down the midway before and after shifts of picking too-small rings from between too-big bottles, the cries of "twenty more, and up goes

the donkey" caught Sandy's attention at first but then realization set in that the bloody Barker had no intention of getting his little donkey to mount the ladder, no matter how much money we gave him. We were all suckers. Don't be a sucker.

SCORPIO (October 23rd - November 21st)

It's been a hard road Scorpio, and for a sign that is noted for jealousy, possessiveness and sexual obsession this time on the run has provided some higher learning even for you. Battling paranoia and no sleep, you might yet salvage this wreck of a life, turn back from your dead end and make a home somehow. You've got a brother down, and you're not so up yourself. Believe in and work for the Canadian Dream. You don't want to use your last breath to ask the emptiness around you "Where have all the good people gone?" do you?

SAGITTARIUS (November 22nd - Dec. 21st)

Preservation and/or advancement of self-interest have lead to a lot of conflict. It's like Tom Stoppard said; "War is capitalism with the gloves off and many who go to war know it but they go to war because they don't want to be a hero." Be a hero. Reduce your individual self-interest.

CAPRICORN (December 22nd - January 19th)

Time to test your cultural integrity Capricorn. Select the activity you'd most likely find personally fulfilling. 1) Check out a webcam featuring a member of the National Council of Dull Men. 2) Read published lewd text messages hijacked from a celebrity's cell-phone so as to derive titillating enjoyment out of guessing the words replaced by asterisks. 3) Watching snuff films that some collection of freaks smuggled from thought to reality. 4) Realizing that you're leading a socially and environmentally responsible existence.

AQUARIUS (January 20th - February 18th)

An "obsession with politics" needn't ruin your social life. You just have to lay back a little bit and tighten up those divisions between career aspirations and personal relationships. How else can you stop your friends from cringing when your number comes up on call display?

PISCES (February 19th - March 20th)

With spring here the challenge will be in deciding which spectacle to direct your attention toward. As the males emerge decked out in their mating plumage and attempting to draw attention to their selves with unnecessarily loud conveyances you might be lead to speculate that if this is the only method by which our species can avoid extinction, maybe we deserve to die out.

ARIES (March 21st - April 19th)

It has been said that there is a gulf of mutual incomprehension between the two cultures, those being literary intellectualism and the physical sciences. If they're all as ingenious and explorative as you Aries, Sandy is willing to give smart people more credit than that. Any smart person - even average people - should recognize that the two cultures are constituted nowadays more by economic criteria than by area of study. And as they say, they're separated by a "growing gap" that owes its expansion more to greed than intelligence.



Summer Programs at Moonlight Bay Centre

What are YOU doing with your summer?

"This summer's staff was one of the best that I've ever been part of."
(Summer 2003 staff)

- A supportive, fun, and tight-knit team environment on Lake Wabamun
- A chance to further develop your skills and knowledge
- A meaningful opportunity to work in a key inner-city agency (Bissell Centre)
- A comprehensive week-long training session
- Access to camp recreation facilities and equipment
- Room and board in a comfortable cabin situated in a natural setting

"I learned so much..." (Summer 2003 staff)

Seeking promising students (18 years+) and non-students for a range of positions, including program staff, waterfront staff, assistant manager, caretakers, and cooks. Not yet 18? Check out the Moonlight Bay Volunteer Leadership Program!

"It has been an honor and a pleasure to work at Moonlight Bay this summer."
(Summer 2003 staff)

For more information, see postings at U of A, GMCC, and Earth's General Store, or contact Kathryn Rambow (Manager of Moonlight Bay Centre) at krambow@bissellcentre.org

Performers Wanted!

Family Entertainment Night
(Coffee House)

Open Stage! Live Music!
Light Supper! Poetry Reading!

DOOR PRIZES!!

Tuesday, May 18th

Supper 6 PM
Music at 7 PM

Bissell Centre

10527 - 96 St.
Contact: Earl @ 423-2285 ext. 144

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

For the Inner City

- Casual Labour
- Life Management Skills Training
- Career Counseling
- Résumé & Cover Letter Preparation
- Job Interview Skills
- Internet Training
- H2S Training (limited funding available)
- WHMIS/Standard First Aid Training

All services offered at no cost!

CASUAL LABOUR

"Pay the worker –
NOT the broker"

Minimum hourly rate - \$8.00
Minimum 4 hours per day

Workers available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day
Bookings taken within work hours
Mon-Thurs: 7am-2pm
Fri: 7am-noon

Need someone to help with...

- Yard Work/Snow Removal
- Loading/Unloading
- Decorating – internal/external
- Cleaning – domestic/industrial
- Manufacturing
- General Labour

All services offered at no cost!

BISSELL CENTRE

Telephone: 424-4385

Or

Casual Labour program for women at
Elizabeth Fry Society of Edmonton
Telephone: 421-1175 ext 22
Mon-Fri 7pm-3pm



Bissell Centre's
Thrift Shoppes

8818 118 Ave
471-6644

9232 34 Ave
440-1883

New and
Gently-Used
Fashions
plus.....

- furniture • home goods
- jewellery • collectibles
- antiques

the best quality
lowest prices

We are 100% non-profit
and locally owned
No GST ever

ALL PROFITS SUPPORT THE PROGRAMS
AND SERVICES OF BISSELL CENTRE
IN EDMONTON'S INNER CITY



Earth's General Store

ACTIVIST AGENDA

MAY 2004

May 1st, Saturday @ 1:00 p.m. - 2:30 pm: To launch the Pesticide Free Lawns Campaign in Edmonton a presentation and discussion panel entitled **PESTICIDES, POLITICS AND HEALTH** featuring Helen Jones, Carole Rubin and Dr. Irena Buka. Location: Stanley A. Milner Library, 7 Sir Winston Churchill Square. Contact: Sierra Club at 439-1160 or visit <http://prairie.sierraclub.ca/>

May 1st, Saturday @ 3:00 pm - 4:30 pm: As part of the Pesticide Free Lawns Campaign in Edmonton there will be a **GREEN THUMB/GREEN PLANET** workshop featuring author and activist Carole Rubin Location: Stanley A. Milner Library, 7 Sir Winston Churchill Square. Contact: Sierra Club at 439-1160 or visit <http://prairie.sierraclub.ca/>

May 2nd, Sunday @ 10:00 am - 2:00 pm: **RIVER VALLEY CLEAN UP!** Join Sierra Club supporters this year for some fun with garbage bags at Emily Murphy Park. Volunteers should bring appropriate clothing and gloves suitable for picking up garbage. After the clean up, we will have a BBQ and refreshments for all who have joined in to help out. Location: Emily Murphy Park (south east end of Groat Bridge). Contact: Sierra Club at 439-1160 or visit <http://prairie.sierraclub.ca/>

May 2nd, Sunday: **RIVER VALLEY CLEAN UP!** Spring is the perfect time to clean up Edmonton's beautiful river valley. Why not join in the fun and help make your community even

better? The clean up begins at Victoria Park (12130 River Valley Road) on Sunday May 2. For more information, contact the River Valley Clean-Up Coordinator at rivervalleyclean-up@edmonton.ca

May 8th, Saturday @ 10:00-5:30 pm: **INTERNATIONAL FAIR TRADE DAY.** There will be events happening across Canada. Earth's General Store and Ten Thousand Villages will be offering fair trade information and samples through out the day. Location: Ten Thousand Villages, 10432-82 Ave. 439-8349 (www.tenthousandvillages.com) and Earth's General Store, 10832 Whyte Avenue, 439-8725. For more information about Fair Trade visit <http://www.transfair.ca/ftw/index.html>

May 8th, Saturday @ 9:00 - 11:00 am: **GEAR SWAP.** It's that time again - MEC's spring Gear Swap! Pick up some great second-hand gear or sell the stuff you no longer need. Call 488-6614 to reserve a selling table. The Gear Swap opens at 9:00, but the line-up starts long before that. Location: Mountain Equipment Co-op's parking lot at 102 Avenue and 123rd Street. Contact: 488-6614 ext. 231. www.mec.ca/edmonton

May 8th, Saturday @ 12:00 - 5:00 pm: **CYCLING TRAFFIC SAFETY** co-ordinated by the MEC Kids Club. This day of fun for kids ages 6 to 9 will introduce them to safety and traffic skills while cycling. This course is being taught by MEC staff member and experienced cyclist Randy Ross. This is a 5 to 6-hour course. Location: Mountain Equipment Co-op's parking lot at 102 Avenue and 123rd Street. Contact: 488-6614 ext. 231. www.mec.ca/edmonton

May 10th, Monday @ 7:30 pm: **NATURE CONSERVANCY SLIDE SHOW.** Come hear about the local areas the Nature Conservancy is protecting and where you can walk, bird watch and enjoy these special places. This is a great way to get to know the region around Edmonton, learn of some places close by to visit, and find out how

you can help protect this land. Location: Mountain Equipment Co-op's 12328 - 102 Avenue. Admission: Free. Contact: 488-6614 ext. 231. www.mec.ca/edmonton

May 12th, Wednesday @ 4:00-9:00 pm: **SMALL CHANGE, BIG DIFFERENCE!** Edmonton's National Fair Trade Fair - featuring Fair Trade Merchandise, Presentations & Film Screenings. Location: Queen Alexandra Community Hall, 10425 University (75) Avenue. Admission: FREE. Contact: Edmonton Small Press Association (ESPA): (780) 434-9236 / espa2002@shaw.ca and/or BioFreedom - Didem Varol at didem.varol@telus.net. National Fair Trade Weeks (NFTW 2004) <http://www.transfair.ca>

May 13th, Thursday @ 7:00 pm: MEC Edmonton presents the best of the **WATERWALKER FILM FESTIVAL**, Canada's film festival on canoeing, kayaking, and the conservation of waterways. Location: Metro Cinema - Zeidler Hall - main floor of the Citadel Theatre Complex (9828-101A Avenue). For more information, visit www.paddlingcanada.com/waterwalker. Admission: \$8 in advance at MEC or \$10 at the door. Doors at 6:30 pm show starts at 7:00 pm. Contact: 488-6614 ext. 231 www.mec.ca/edmonton

May 14th - 16th - PEOPLE AND THE PLANET CONFERENCE. Workshops focusing on "issue streams." A sampling of workshop topics includes conservation of biodiversity, land stewardship, industrial agriculture, health and the environment, nuclear energy, climate change, forests and biodiversity, trade and the environment, corporate responsibility, building a sustainable society, and nurturing cultural and spiritual values for the environment. Location: South Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) Calgary (16 Avenue and 14 Street NW). Contact: 1-888-810-4204 email: peopleandtheplanet@ca.inter.net or Sierra Club of Canada www.sierraclub.ca *** Cut

Replacements Available for Our Voice 2004 Calendar

Please note that the months of June, November & December of the *Our Voice Urban Exposure Calendar* contain printing errors.

Replacement calendars are now available from *Our Voice*.

For more information, please contact Ron at:
423-2285 Ext. 139.

We apologize for the inconvenience.

down on fossil fuel use by carpooling to this conference - use the handy tool at www.sustainable.ca/info and check out *Ridesharing*

May 29th, Saturday @ 9am to 5pm: **DIGITAL STORYTELLING - GATHERING STORIES, BUILDING COMMUNITY** with Robert Kershaw and presented by The Alberta Council for Global Cooperation (ACGC). Location: FAVA, Ortona Armory, 9722-102nd Street. Admission: \$30.00. Contact: ACGC at acgc@web.net

In Memory of Tooker Gomberg
If you are interested in participating in a group to work on creating a permanent memorial in Edmonton mark the life work of Tooker Gomberg please contact Bill Stollery - ph. 432-4052 or e-mail rstoller@shaw.ca

"**An Action A Day Keeps Global Capitalism Away**" by local activist Mike Hudema Book Launch. Stay tuned for more information about this exciting event happening at Earth's General Store in May. For more information check out: http://www.btlbooks.com/New_Titles/anactionaday.htm

Moving?

Earth's General Store has a cart to help you move around the neighbourhood - helping to cut fossil fuel use.

If you know of an upcoming activist event that should be listed here please email Michael at egs@interbaun.com or contact Earth's General Store at 439-8725. If you would like to receive bi-weekly updates to this e-newsletter please contact egs@interbaun.com